

to say that a strategic frontier was necessary to the new Empire, and that necessity knows no law. They appealed to history, to race, to language, to that very principle of nationalities of which the Treaty of Frankfort embodies in fact a flagrant violation.¹ With a curious pedantry they argued that Alsace-Lorraine had been an integral part of Germany until by force and fraud the French got possession of it. Its people, of German blood and German speech, had never ceased to belong to the German nation. In reclaiming them at last, united Germany was only vindicating an ancient imprescriptible right. To these allegations there is one answer which makes it unnecessary to test their accuracy. It is that since human beings are not chattels but reasonable creatures, no argument drawn from a past state of things, from kinship or from community of speech, can justify the forcible incorporation of a group of men into a system which they regard as alien, or their severance from a system which they prefer and with which they recognize their affinity. If the Alsatians and the Lorrainers had desired to become German, all other reasons would be superfluous; since they were unwilling, no reasons whatever can avail.

The German apology has not convinced the world, but these assertions, irrelevant as they are, have undeniably impressed it. It is therefore worth while, by way of parenthesis, to qualify their crudity.

1. The question of race, for what it is worth, is not the green border') at an early stage of the war. The exception was the city of Belfort with the zinc and iron fortifications, which was finally left in French hands in exchange for the additional surrender of a few places on the Luxembourg border, particularly valuable on account of mineral wealth.

¹ See Mommsen's *Letters to the German People* (1870) and the answer of Fustel de Coulanges.